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IPSA World Congress 2012
8.7. – 12.7.2012 in Madrid/Spain

Paper presented in Session RC05 "Comparative Studies on Local Government and Politics", Panel "Effects on Local Institutions of Multilevel Governance: Evolving from Hierarchy to Policentric Networks and New Forms of Service Delivery?"

The Impact of Federal Agglomeration Policy on Swiss Federalism: Governance Change in Swiss Metropolitan Areas

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Abstract

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Whereas theories of federalism help to understand systems of interlocking politics in multilevel governance, the politics of scale approach draws attention to the relationship and the distribution of power among different federal state levels. Drawing a link between theories of federalism and the politics of scale approach, this paper proposes a theoretical framework to analyse the construction of new levels of governance and of the structures of negotiation between the different levels of governance within the multi-tiered hierarchy. Tackling the question of multilevel governance with an analysis of the politics of scale will allow me to designate new conflict lines and the change in the relationship between the different federal state levels. The paper presents first empirical results based on this theoretical framework.

Introduction

Metropolitan growth is a worldwide topic. Today, over 50 percent of the world population lives in urban areas (DESA, 2012). Even though the image of Switzerland as a rural "Heidiland" still persists – and the Swiss do not identify themselves with an urban country – Switzerland is in fact a highly urbanised country. Two third of the Swiss population live in city regions (Kübler, 2006: 260). According to the Federal Statistical Office, there are 50 agglomerations and five metropolitan regions in Switzerland. The term „agglomeration" refers to a coherent area with at least 20'000 inhabitants. Agglomerations consist of a core city and municipalities that are connected to this core city (several indicators for this connectedness exist, e.g. commuter movements, see Schuler et al., 2005). Metropolitan areas are larger urban areas and consist of more than one agglomeration.

Despite the demographic and economic relevance of agglomerations and metropolitan areas in Switzerland, city-regions do not have an independent position in the Swiss federal system (Klöti et al., 1993). Swiss urban areas are functional spaces. They have continued to extend over and across institutional boundaries. Since there were no significant territorial reforms since 1934, metropolitan areas in Switzerland are characterized by high governmental fragmentation. According to the Federal Statistical Office, there is a growing number of communes which are characterised as urban, and population has grown significantly in city regions (see figure 1). This signifies a missing congruence between the functional and the institutional territories. Because of the institutional fragmentation, communes within an agglomeration have to cooperate with other communes. Especially the core cities cover services not only for their own commune, but for residents of the whole agglomeration. As in other countries, this leads to centrality charges for core cities. The process of metropolitanisation affects the architecture of intergovernmental relations (Kübler et al., 2003: 263). As Kübler et al. (2003: 269) point out, the process of metropolitanisation and the accompanying change of the architecture of intergovernmental relations includes a rising level of conflict between different federal state levels and between city regions itself in general. It is widely assumed that cities and urban regions gain importance as relevant levels of regulation (see e.g. Le Galès, 2002, Brenner, 2004). But the Swiss federal system does not reflect the weight of cities at all. On the contrary, rural and mountain areas are overrepresented. Up until the end of the 20th century, cities were not even mentioned in the Swiss Constitution. Only in 1999 did the new constitution include a new article (Article 50) which mentions cities and agglomerations for the first time (Fiechter, 2010).[1] The new Article 50 obliges the Confederation to consider the situation of urban as well as rural areas. Based on this new article, the Swiss Federal Government initiated in 2001 the so-called "agglomeration policy". With the agglomeration policy, the federal government for the first time became involved directly with metropolitan governance. The federal government wants to support the cantons and communes in their activities of inter-municipal cooperation in metropolitan regions. The overall goal is to strengthen the economic attractivity of the densely populated, urbanised regions and to provide higher qual-

[1] The federal constitution was wholly revised in the 1990, and was approved by vote in 1999.

ity of life for the inhabitants (Bundesamt für Raumentwicklung ARE and Staatssekretariat für Wirtschaft SECO, 2006). Eventually this should strengthen the positions of cities and agglomerations within the federal system. This means that the federal government gets involved in urban governance questions. It remains an open question, whether the federal agglomeration policy affects governance schemes at the metropolitan level and therefore really changes the relationship between the different federal state levels.

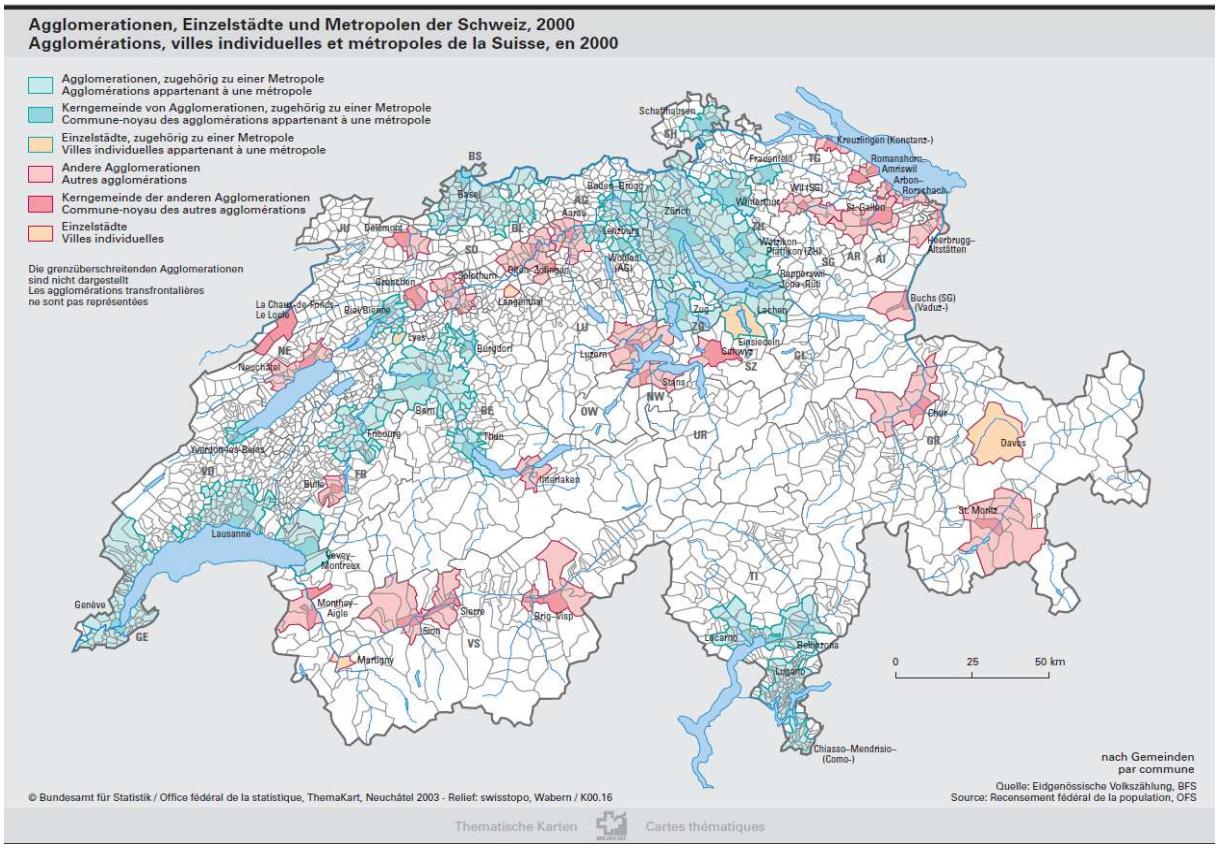
In order to analyse the impact of federal agglomeration policy on Swiss federalism, we need a theoretical framework that addresses the construction of new levels of governance and of the structures of negotiation between the different levels of governance within the multi-tiered hierarchy. Two main research traditions are suitable to generate such a framework: on the one hand the theoretical work on *metropolitan governance*. Metropolitan governance studies look into steering capacity in metropolitan regions, they analyse development, causes, and consequences of different types of metropolitan governance. Within the metropolitan governance debate, the *politics of scale* approach is of special interest for our purpose, because it draws attention to the relationship and the distribution of power among different federal state levels. On the other hand *theories of federalism* help to understand systems of interlocking politics in multi-level governance and the role and authority of local government. There is a lot of work about problems of multi-level governance and possible kinds of co-operation schemes. But it is rarely discussed, if and how new state levels emerge, what role they play, and how they are framed. Because the rising level of conflicts between different state levels is hardly addressed in federalism research studies, this paper wants to draw a link between theories of federalism and the politics of scale approach. Tackling the question of multilevel governance with an analysis of the politics of scale will allow us to designate new conflict lines and the change in the relationship between the different federal state levels.

For some time, research addressing challenges to the Swiss federal system has pointed to the unclear role and function of agglomerations in the Swiss federal system (see e.g. Klöti, 2006, Schenkel, 2001, Vatter, 2006). Almost twenty years ago, scholars (Klöti et al., 1993: 180) demanded from the federal government an explicit city and agglomeration policy and improvements in the vertical cooperation of the federal, cantonal, and local level. Klöti, Haldemann and Schenkel (1993: 181) did not in mainly promote an improvement in the legal status of cities – which has meanwhile been achieved with the new constitutional article 50 – but a gradual solution of steering problems in agglomerations through increasing cooperation between cities, communes of the agglomeration, cantons and the federal government. Horizontal and vertical cooperation schemes within the Swiss federal system could alleviate some agglomeration problems, but in respect to informal processes, questions about the legitimacy of such decision making processes increasingly arise (Vatter and Wälti, 2003). Some scholars concluded that increasing horizontal and vertical cooperation would turn the Swiss cooperative federal system toward a multi-level system (Kübler et al., 2003: 264). Others suppose the traditional federal system to be still dominant despite some new forms of metropolitan governance (van der Heiden, 2010). However, it is not easy to make general statements about how the metropolitanisation process affected/s Swiss federalism. To analyse governance change, it is often more fruitful to move to the metropolitan level. Various studies focus-

ing on governance in Swiss agglomerations analyse types of metropolitan governance settings in different urban areas (e.g. Kübler and Schwab, 2007, Sager, 2005, Koch, 2011). They find different governance settings and – depending on this – differences in the quality of decision-making-processes (Kübler and Schwab, 2007, Sager, 2005), and also differences in forms of governance change (Koch, 2011).

In the following, the paper gives an overview of the main arguments of the two theoretical strands mentioned above, theories of federalism and politics of scale. Based on this, we present a theoretical framework that fills in the missing link between these two theoretical traditions and provides the relevant theoretical research questions. The third section of the paper discusses the impact of the Swiss federal agglomeration policy on Swiss federalism against the backdrop of this theoretical framework. This is only a first empirical step. In the conclusion, further research topics are developed.

Figure 1: Swiss agglomerations, cities, and metropolitan regions



Source: Federal Statistical Office.

Theoretical reflections on governance change

a) Theories of federalism: cooperation in multi-level governance systems

There seems to be a renewed attention of political science to institutional arrangements and how political authority is dispersed among two or more levels of government (Erk and Swenden, 2010). For a long time theories of federalism have been concerned with questions derived from the structure of negotiation in intergovernmental cooperation. Federalism studies analyse vertically divided political authority between orders of government. It is not our goal here to characterise federalism in an integral way.[2] But in theories of federalism we find answers to the question of how governance in metropolitan areas can be achieved, that is, how the different state authorities can cooperate. Especially theories of interlocking politics and of multi-level governance can help to understand the organisational relations between different state levels in federal systems (Kübler et al., 2003: 269).

According to Scharpf (1978), there are two kinds of cooperation: vertical and horizontal integration. The different federal state levels were never totally separated and autonomous. Vertical and horizontal intergovernmental relations are not new phenomena. But it is widely argued that such multi-level relations increased with economic growth and globalisation. Systems of negotiation exist not only in several fields of policies but also in and between all levels of the state (Grande, 1995: 327). This leads us to the assumption that the process of more vertical and horizontal cooperation (or the focus on the new 'metropolitan scale') increasingly leads to conflicts between scales. Scharpf defines the problem of joint decision trap in federations: According to him (1988: 254), there are two "simple and powerful conditions" for joint decision trap: The dependence of decisions upon the agreement of constituent governments, and the fact that the agreement has to be unanimous. Scharpf (258ff.) distinguishes between „problem-solving" and „bargaining" style of decision-making. According to Scharpf's theory, it is only possible to overcome sub-optimal policy outcomes under the before mentioned conditions, if a "problem-solving" style of decision-making can be maintained. In addition to the discussion about joint decision-making in federations this topic is also eminent with regard to the European integration process. Grande (1995) argues that the complexity of the state has increased, which has leaded to increasing joint decision-making between the different federal state levels. With regard to the European integration process, Grande speaks of a specific multi-level governance system with three conflict lines: institutional, material, and ideological (the so-called "Mehrebenenverflechtung", Grande, 1995: 329).

As a concept multi-level governance was established in political science with the European integration process (Benz, 1998: 558f.) Multi-level governance is not a new phenomenon, since cooperative federalism never tends to separate the different federal levels but aims at the coordination of the mutual dependences. Therefore, joint decision-making is very typical for multi-level governance. But what do we actually mean when we speak about multi-level gov-

[2] For the discussion of different types of federalism see e.g. Riker (1987), Elazar (1987), Lijphart (1999).

ernance? Multi-level governance is different from a hierarchical system (Benz, 2004: 126f.). According to Hooghe (1996: 18, cited in Benz, 2004: 129) multi-level governance are "variable combinations of governments on multiple layers of authority [...]. The relations are characterized by mutual interdependence on each others' resources, not by competition for scarce resources". We speak of levels of governance, because the system is organised based on different territories. Although the competences are organised according to the levels of such systems (most typically federations), a lot of tasks are interdependent and the decisions at different levels need to be coordinated in many policy-fields. The term "governance in multi-level systems" implies that political processes transcend levels. Therefore, joint decision ("Politikverflechtung") is an important feature of multi-level governance systems. Benz (1998) distinguishes to kinds of coordination in multi-level systems: in hierarchically structured cooperation ("tight coupling"), higher levels can make binding decisions for lower levels whereas cooperation in non hierarchical structure follow the principles of "loose coupling". In "loose coupled" areas of negotiation, decision-making processes take place in informal procedures and through the medium of information (565).

The problem of joint decision-making is closely related to concept of multi-level governance accordingly. According to Stein and Turkewitsch (2008: 7) multi-level governance was a "broadening of the concept of federalism to include more than two levels of government and more than autonomous policy-making structures". The use of the multi-level governance-concept allows catching the broad scope of decision-making, numerous types of decision-makers, and multiple levels of decision making (8). The concept of multi-level governance does not just include more decision-making levels (supranational and local level) than the concept of federalism usually consists of. We do not understand multi-level governance as a theory, but more a descriptive concept: The concept of multi-level governance takes into account the role of the local level (24). Whereas in theories about federalism, the local governments are perceived as weak authorities, the concept of multi-level governance "highlights the growing importance of actors at the regional and the local level" (ibid.). We agree with Stein and Turketwitsch when they say that the multi-level government is not only a descriptive concept but has also – like federalism – normative attributes (26). Researchers who use the multi-level governance concept normally throw a positive light on intertwined negotiation systems. Therefore the emphasis is more on cooperation than on conflict in joint decision-making and more on partnership (27). Although I use the term multi-level governance, my intention is to look exactly at the conflictive aspects of joint decision-making.

But as Benz (2004: 130) points out, a distinct definition of multi-level governance does not exist. The word governance implies that in addition to public actors, private actors are involved in decision making too. Analyses of urban politics need to include also nongovernmental players and need to have always a multi-level focus (Kübler and Pagano, 2012). Over all, the concept of multi-level governance puts a focus first on territorially organised political entities, called levels; second on the political structures and processes that connect these levels and third, on the interrelations between the processes and rules that connect these levels and the processes and rules within those levels (Benz, 2004: 131).

To analyse the impact of the Swiss federal agglomeration policy on Swiss federalism, we have to address the question of federal change from a theoretical point of view. According to Colino (2010: 17), studies about federalism lack a theory about the explanation of change: "Change has been mainly conceptualized in terms of growing centralization-decentralization […], cooperation-competition […] and symmetry-asymmetry". But the capacity for adaptation of federal systems differs. In his view, studies about change of federal systems so far are limited to either long-term structural or systemic explanations or to an actor-centred focus. Therefore Colino elaborates a conceptual framework to analyse federal change. He distinguishes two main dimensions: the integration-disintegration of the formal framework and the centripetality-centrifugality of federal relations (22ff.). The formal framework dimensions include the constitutional design, the intergovernmental structure of decision and resources, and the intergovernmental decision-making rules. The federal relations dimensions include the interaction and joint decision styles, the type of governmental actors' strategies, and the conflict lines and intergovernmental coalitions. According to these dimensions, he characterises four ideal types of federal subsystems ("balanced", unitary, segmented, "accommodation") for comparison (24). Since it is not our goal to compare federal systems, we do not use these ideal types. But we can draw on the six dimensions to describe the federal character of metropolitan regions and to find relevant dimension of change of the federal constellations therein.

A federal system divides power between institutions and levels of government. But tensions exist between shared rule and autonomy (Benz and Colino, 2011: 384): shared rules ease coordination between levels of governments but makes policy making more difficult on lower levels of government. According to Benz and Colino (385), who refer to Riker, federations suffer from instability because of two self-enforcing processing, either the tendency towards over-centralization or towards excessive decentralization. In other words, there are two directions of change: on the one hand centripetal and on the other hand centrifugal tendencies in the allocation of power (Benz, 2008: 3). Federal systems are constantly affected by such centripetal and centrifugal mechanism. Benz speaks about "implicit constitutional change" in contrast to "explicit constitutional change", but a change of the formal constitution is rather difficult (6).

According to Benz and Colino (2011) processes of social change are the causes of change in federations. Processes of social change "lead to a 'rescaling' of tasks and calls for a revision of the allocation of powers and resources" (Benz and Colino, 2011: 385f.). They identify three mechanisms of collective action that have an impact on the organisation of democratic federations (386): mobility of actors, loyalty of individuals to a group, and political structuring of actors. First, the mobility of actors does not necessarily lead to a reorganisation of territories but often call for intergovernmental arrangements. Second: changes in loyalties – e.g. because of the increasing mobility across political boundaries – can affect federal structures. This is especially important for our purpose, when we look at the emergence of new federal state levels. It can be assumed that without a certain loyalty (or identification) towards the metropolitan region/agglomeration, it is not likely that a new federal level can emerge. Third, the political structuring of collective interest has an effect on federal structures (e.g. changes

in political parties and party systems) (386). According to Riker (1965, cited in Benz, 2008: 32), the "party system is an important factor to explain the dynamics of federalism".[3]

According to Benz and Colino (2011: 390), possible objects of constitutional change are the authority, fiscal relations and fiscal autonomy, representation and participation in central decisions (e.g. vertical and horizontal intergovernmental bodies), and symbolic or community recognition. They distinguish between federal change initiated at "constitutional level" or at the "level of normal policy making" and between the two causes "intentional actions and constraints" and "institutional tensions and ideas" (391). The implicit change of patterns of governance is especially interesting for our purpose. This is at the level of normal policy making and is caused by intentional actions and constraints. The main actors involved in this mechanism are federal and regional ministers and elected officials, non-elected officials in sectoral departments (396). Also interesting for our purpose is the mechanism of "intergovernmental competition" and "'paradigmatic' shifts in ideas and values" they identify. Causes for this mechanism are institutional tensions and ideas, the main actors involved are governments, political parties, public opinion, and experts (396).

All these elements of federalism theories help to analyse and understand cooperation in multi-level governance systems and changes in the relationship between the different federal state levels. But these theories of federalism generally do not deal with possible new levels of governance within the national state, since their focus is on the one hand on the 'old' institutionalised federal levels and on the other hand on the emergence of new supranational levels. Also Benz does not mention the emergence and role of "new" levels in multi-level governance systems. But these are very common not only in the scientific literature but also in everyday life, when we speak of the new metropolitan level. In the Swiss context, the term "agglomeration" is also very common. Although Swiss federalism did not undergo a major change, the agglomeration is often treated as a possible new fourth level of governance. Therefore, the next section looks into interscalar relations, the production of new scales and changing hierarchies.

b) Politics of Scale: cities in a globalised world

Le Galès (2002) describes the transformation of European cities during the process of globalisation and new forms of governance that came along: the gap between the limited political autonomy of urban regions and their growing economic importance in globalized capitalism put pressure on existing intergovernmental relations. According to Le Galès (260), this leads to a strengthening of the cities against the sub-national and national level in the long-term. This would provide new opportunities for cities and agglomerations because of the regained economic and political influence of urban areas. Le Galès (2003) calls this – very optimistic – appraisal "le retour des villes". This would lead us to the initial hypothesis that in the course of the change in the governance structures, cities and urban areas actually have gained importance and influence in the federal system. As we will see, there is another more common, but also more pessimistic view on the changing architecture of governance in multi-level systems.

[3] According to Riker's theory, "an integrative party system reduces incentives of federal and regional governments to change the balance of power to their individual profit" (Riker 1964, cited in Benz, 2008: 2).

From the point of view of the rescaling theory, political responsibilities have altered (Brenner, 2004): with the ongoing globalisation process, cities gained importance – not only in economic, but also in political matters. The rescaling theory predicts a shift in political steering capacities, not only from the national state to supranational bodies (e.g. the EU) but also to urban areas. With these ongoing "glocalisation"-processes (Swyngedouw, 1997), metropolitan regions became nodal points in economic processes (van der Heiden, 2010). According to Brenner (2002: 18) the process of rescaling on the one hand strengthens neoconservative and neoliberal political forces. But on the other hand, Brenner sees a potential for democratic mobilization. This means that rescaling does not necessarily foster (or lead to) neoliberal policies. In principle, this process could enable alternative policies such as those implied by Le Galès with his "le retour des villes" assumption.

The process of scaling is an expression of social-spatial processes (Brenner, 2000): scales have different social-spatial characteristics which also influences the relationship between different scales. Therefore, geographical scales are always embedded in a certain power structure. The "politics of scale" approach helps us to better understand these processes. Referring to Lefebvre and Castells, Brenner (366) points out that the territorial organization, the social production, the political contestation and the historical reconfiguration of geographical scales is a very important research topic. Scale is not a pre-given physical space: "geographical scale is socially produced and simultaneously a platform and container of certain kinds of social activity. [...] Far from neutral and fixed, therefore, geographical scales are the product of economic, political and social activities and relationships; as such they are as changeable as those relationships themselves" (Neil Smith, 1995, 60-61, cited in Brenner, 2004: 8f.). It was Lefebvre who turned the focus towards a 'multiscalar politics of scale' and he focused not only on the definitions of different scales but also upon interscalar relations and the struggles to transform scalar hierarchies (Brenner, 2000: 374). Therefore the term 'politics of scale' implies that scalar hierarchies as scales itself are not pre-given or fix. They are contested and can be reorganised and transcended. As Brenner (374) points out: "[...] the power to reorganize geographical scales – in their role both as containers and as hierarchies – has become an essential basis for the power to command and control social space as a whole". Referring to Smith, Brenner defines politics of scale as follows: "In the context of contemporary debates on urban governance, the politics of scale refers to the decentering of traditional national urban hierarchies and national intergovernmental systems and to the concomitant emergence of new subnational political strategies to position cities and regions within supranational circuits of capital, money, commodities and labor" (Brenner, 2002: 4). Brenner identifies three political strategies that may lie behind metropolitan reform initiatives: accumulation strategies, redistributive strategies, state strategies. State strategies include forms of coordination between organisations within an urban region or the organisation of the division of responsibilities (Brenner, 2003: 314). Although Brenner doesn't mention who is supporting such state strategies, we can assume that officials are concerned with challenges to the federal hierarchy within metropolitan areas and in the nation as a whole due to the changing institutional design in metropolitan areas.

The concept of "Politics of scale" includes two different aspects (Brenner, 2001, Koch, 2011). On the one hand, Brenner (2001: 598) identifies a "singular" meaning of politics of scale. This is found in studies about politics of scale, which focus on the construction of a scale, its definition and importance (or in other words: the "content" of particular scales). On the other hand, there is a "plural" meaning of politics of scale. This means the focus on the relationship between the different state levels (Koch, 2011: 33), or – in Brenner's words: the "changing positionalities [of scales] in relation to other geographical scales and scaling processes" (2001: 603). Brenner does not question the importance of research focusing on the construction of scales (e.g. the work of Marston, 2000), but he insists that this has been researched exhaustively and that the "plural" meaning of "politics of scale" is more interesting. Brenner (2001: 601) identifies a general methodological shortcoming when he points out that the mere existence of a scalar organization does not automatically results in relevant scale effects. For "the notion of a politics of scale refers to the production, reconfiguration or contestation of particular differentiations, orderings and hierarchies *among* geographical scales" (600). The distinction of state power between the regional and the local scale is intertwined with the spatial centralisation of state power within a national territory (605). The evolution of scales and the change of scalar structuration is path-dependent and incremental (607). Therefore the characteristics of federations have to be taken into account when we want to research the evolution and changing hierarchies among different levels of governance. State institutions play a significant role (but are not the only ones) in producing and modifying scalar hierarchies. According to Brenner, it is a largely neglected research topic to investigate the conditions under which scalar structuration generates social, spatial and scalar effects (606). Form the politics of scale approach, we therefore derive the general assumption that in the age of globalisation, governance models in city regions changed, and cities and agglomerations gained steering capacities, having therefore more influence in the federal system.

The next section looks at those different types of metropolitan governance. I will argue that these models of governance imply different relative strengths of scale within the federal system.

c) Types of Governance and the distribution of power

What is the solution to problems of joint decision-making in functionally integrated metropolitan areas? There is a long debate about the organisation of governance in city regions. Different types of governance provide different solutions to the above discussed problems of policy-coordination; they reach from centralisation to decentralisation and form consolidation to further fragmentation of metropolitan areas (for an overview, see Kübler and Pagano, 2012, Savitch and Vogel, 2009). Basically, there are three theoretical approaches, each of which reflects an ideal type of metropolitan governance: the *metropolitan reform*, the *public choice*, and the *new regionalism* tradition. These types of metropolitan governance reflect different theoretical perspectives on the problem of steering capacities in city regions (for this and in the following, see Kübler, 2003, Savitch and Vogel, 2009).

The metropolitan government tradition sees fragmentation as the main problem in urban areas. This model asks for metropolitan governments in order that the political boundaries correspond to the functional boundaries. This can be reached through amalgamations or with an additional political layer at the level of the metropolitan area. In the 1960s and 1970s such metropolitan political institutions were introduced widely. These centralised and consolidated institutions emphasized administrative modernization, efficient delivery of public services, and interterritorial equalization (Brenner, 2003: 300). But these large scale projects of metropolitan governance were abandoned by the early 1980s. In the 1950s, the public choice tradition emerged as a critique of the metropolitan reform tradition. Based on economic theories, the public choice model sees fragmentation as the best solution. In this view, competition between independent communes leads to efficient public service production.

In the 1990s, a second wave of metropolitan reform tradition emerged throughout Western Europe (Brenner, 2003: 302). The new wave of metropolitan governance reforms – also called 'new regionalism' has a different focus. Instead of institutional reforms, this model promotes cooperation between private and public actors which leads to a complex interlinked system of cooperation. The metropolitan reform tradition favours decentralized approaches to problem-solving which promote cooperation, coordination and collaboration within policy-networks, rather than structural consolidation (Brenner, 2002: 9). According to the new regionalism approach, there is no absolute need for new territorial institutions, because voluntary new forms of cooperation emerge between public and private actors.

Brenner (2003: 302-04) identifies four trends that are strongly connected to the new regionalism tradition: First, the new metropolitan reform strategies are itself a form of locational policy. Second, the new regionalism tradition is embedded in narratives of globalization and European interspatial competition. Third, metropolitan governance is no longer understood as a "vertical, coordinative and redistributive relationship within a national administrative hierarchy" but as a "horizontal, competitive and developmentalist relationship between subnational economic territories battling against one another at European and global scales to attract external capital investment" (Brenner, 2003: 303). And forth, the new metropolitan reform initiatives go along with confrontation between opposed political-economic forces and territories. According to Brenner (304), the new regionalism approach assumes that regions act in competitive mode against each other. Along with metropolitan governance reform initiatives, the function of national states are being "upscaled and downscaled towards a variety of (pre-existent and newly created) institutional levels within an increasingly multitiered political architecture" (307). Three trends go along with this new wave of metropolitan institutional reform (Jessop, 2000): first, the internationalization of the state; second, a denationalization of the state (up- and downscaling), and third, a destatization that includes new forms of partnership (e.g. public private partnerships). Brenner criticises the new regionalism approach: his main critique is that new regionalism provides the basis to foster and legitimate uneven spatial development (Brenner, 2003: 306). Uneven development seems to be not a problem anymore but rather the basis for strategies of economic development (308). Rescaling of urban governance has been dominated by entrepreneurial projects to increase the economic competitiveness of the city regions (372). According to Brenner's critical look at

the new regionalism approach, the focus on economic growth and especially locational policies makes binding coordination impossible and leads to uneven development. Therefore, new regionalism is a clearly ideological concept. Brenner accuses the new regionalism approach to be a medium to further hollow out the welfare states, which have been undermined already since the early 1970. But we have to bear in mind when we look at Switzerland that in contrast to other European countries, where welfare national states have been undermined since the early 1970, Switzerland did not witnesses a reduction of the welfare state in general. The share of national income of the core areas of the welfare state (as social security, health care and education) continually increased until the end of the 20th Century.[4] It is very interesting to use the politics of scale approach for a Swiss case study because the argument that the new metropolitan governance reforms go along with the undermining of welfare policies doesn't hold here.

Brenner (2002: 10) sees the metropolitan reform initiatives that he calls "new regionalism" as expressions of a new politics of scales. But Savitch and Vogel (2009) make an important distinction. In addition to the three approaches *metropolitan reform*, *public choice*, and *new regionalism,* they define a fourth theoretical position to metropolitan governance that is primarily based on the work of Brenner. They call this fourth type *rescaling & reterritorialisation*. This fourth model is based on the assumptions of new regionalism, but defines the role of the city in new way. According to the "rescaling & reterritorialisation" tradition, the economic globalisation process leads to a mechanism of inter-urban competition. Urban governance is not oriented towards the local provision of services anymore. It is outward-oriented and the main goal is to position the city in the international benchmark of city regions. These competitive mechanisms lead to state restructuring on the sub-national level (Savitch and Vogel, 2009: 116). This distinction between the new regionalism model and the "rescaling & reterritorialisation" model (which includes more or less the basic arguments Brenner brings up with regard to new regionalism reform initiatives) is helpful because it takes into account the new role of cities in a global economic interurban competition.

If we are interested in the relation of power between the different levels of governance, we need a theoretical framework to conceptualize the distribution of power. Scholars criticise the metropolitan governance theory for not taking into account the question of power (Mayntz, 2004: 74-75). We assume that the different types of governance imply different sociospatial dimensions and different relative strengths of scales within the federal system. In a first step, we allocate forms of sociospatial relations to the four models of governance. Doing this, we follow the originators of the "scalar turn", who recently claimed to take into account territory, place, scale and networks as relationally intertwined dimensions of sociospatial dimensions (Jessop et al., 2008). As table 1 shows, each of the four dimensions is in line with one of the four models of governance. In a next step, we tried to allocate different types of power distribution to the four governance models and the according sociospatial relations (see Table 1). In the metropolitan governance tradition, power is centralised in consolidated institutions, either trough amalgamations or the institutionalisation of a metropolitan government with

[4] For a discussion about the Swiss welfare system, see Bonoli and Häusermann (2011).

general decision-making power. In the case of Switzerland, this could also mean that the level of the cantons would be the dominant level. The public choice tradition favours independent competing jurisdictions. Therefore, we conclude that the distribution of power in this type of governance is fragmented/competing. For city regions in the Swiss federal system, this means that municipalities are the main actors. The distribution of power in the new regionalism model is diffuse: cooperation between public and private actors and between the different federal state level are typical for this governance model. Therefore we find no dominant level of steering. In the fourth model called "rescaling & reterritorialisation" we call the distribution of power regionalised. City regions – or agglomerations – became nodal points in the process of economic globalisation. This is a very tentative classification that shall be verified and improved during further research.

Table 1: Models of governance and the distribution of power

Model of governance[1]	**Sociospatial dimensions**[2]	**Distribution of power**
Metropolitan Government (Old Regionalism): monocentric, metropolitan government (e.g. consolidation)	Territory : - Bordering, bounding, parcelization, enclosure - Construction of inside/outside divides; constitutive role of the 'outside'	centralised dominant scale: city or metropolitan level
Public choice (Poliycentrism): multi-centred core dominant, rely on market competition	Place: - Proximity, spatial embedding, areal differentiation - Construction of spatial division of labor; differentiation of social relations horizontally among 'core' versus 'peripheral' places	fragmented/competing dominant scale: municipalities
New Regionalism: multi-centred core less dominant, government plus governance in city-region	Scale - Hierarchization, vertical differentiation - Construction of spatial division of labor; differentiation of social relations vertically among 'dominant', 'nodal', and 'marginal' scales	diffuse no dominant scale
Rescaling & reterritorialisation: megapolis, economic globalisation leading to sub-national (local) state restructuring	Networks - Interconnectivity, interdependence, transversal or 'rhizomatic' differentiation - Building networks of nodal connectivity; differentiation of social relations among nodal points within topological networks	regionalised dominant scale: agglomeration

Source: own illustration, [1] according to Savich and Vogel (2009), [2] according to (2008: 393).

d) Towards a theoretical framework

What do we have to take into account to tackle the question of governance change in Swiss metropolitan areas as a result of the federal agglomeration policy? The previous sections showed that theories of federalism help to understand systems of interlocking politics in multi-level governance, whereas the politics of scale approach draws attention to the relationship and the distribution of power among different federal state levels. In the following, we combine the most relevant aspects derived from these theories. Drawing a link between theories of federalism and the politics of scale approach, this preliminary theoretical framework should help to analyse change in the relationship between the different federal state levels within the multi-tiered hierarchy.

As a starting point we take the general assumption derived from the politics of scale approach, which is that the role of city regions changed because of the economic globalisation process that lead to a mechanism of inter-urban competition. It is assumed that governance models in city regions changed, and cities and agglomerations gained steering capacities and therefore they have more influence in the federal system.

Theories about politics of scale as well as theories about federalism point out that it is important to take the federal constellation of metropolitan regions into account, in order to designate new conflict lines and changes in the relationship between different federal state levels. In order to analyse the Swiss case, we have to look at the national, cantonal, and communal level. Theories about federalism focus on the constitutional level, this comprises the identification of the territorially organised political entities and the political structures that connect these levels. Also, types of decision-making and types of decision-makers have to be taken into account: According to federalism theories, government, political parties, public opinion, and experts are important players with reference to governance change. In contrast, the politics of scale approach is more concerned with geographical scales embedded in a power structure. According to the politics of scale approach, we have to focus on scalar hierarchies: what is the relationship between the different levels of governance and which is the dominant scale in metropolitan areas? To analyse the allocation of power in federal relations, we can draw a helpful link to theories of federalism: They propose to study centripetal and centrifugal tendencies to capture federal change. Additionally, they ask to consider not only explicit but also implicit change of patterns of governance.
To understand governance change, we have to ask how policy is coordinated between and within the different levels of governance. Whereas theories about politics of scale rarely deal with this topic, theories of federalism provide useful categories to study interaction and joint decision styles: the main distinction between vertical and horizontal cooperation and between tight and loose coupling helps to understand how processes between and within levels of governance are connected.

Against the background of the politics of scale approach, there is another aspect to consider: We have to take into account the two meanings of politics of scale. This means that we have to focus on the one hand on the construction or production of scale and its contents and on the other hand on the relationship between different scales within the multitiered hierarchy. Scales and scalar hierarchies are not pre-given or fix. Following the politics of scale approach, the emergence and evolution of scales and metropolitan reform initiatives result from path-dependency. And the politics of scale approach assumes that there are political strategies that aim to reorganise the institutional infrastructure in metropolitan areas. Has the metropolitan scale really become the dominant scale in contemporary federalism? According to theories of politics of scale, this is the case when the metropolitan area is assumed to be the place, where economic development can and should take place.

According to this tentative framework, the following empirical part discusses the Swiss federal agglomeration policy and its impact on governance change in the Swiss federal system.

Empirical considerations: Swiss agglomeration policy in a contested federal system

Switzerland is a typical federation, organised on three political levels: the federal (national) level, 26 cantons, and approximately 2500 municipalities. Cantons have a strong position in the Swiss federal system, their autonomy is very high (Linder and Vatter, 2001, Vatter, 2006). Switzerland – in comparison with other federal countries – grants high tax sovereignty and flexibility to its member states (Braun, 2010). But the emergence of problems that affect more than one canton (e.g. in the field of transport, land use planning, and environment), made it more and more difficult to separate policy-making between the different state levels (Serdült and Schenkel, 2006: 554). Financial transfers between federal levels give further evidence for interlocking politics in the Swiss federal system (556). Debates about power, influence and decision-making capability of different state levels are not a new phenomenon. Historically speaking, this was on the agenda several times: In the second half of the 19th century, the distribution of weight between the cantons and the federation was highly contested (Freiburghaus and Buchli, 2003: 30-31). Again in the 1960s, federalism was put on the Swiss political agenda (ibid.): By then, the common perception was that the federal level had become dominant, leaving the cantons with the task of implementation. Whereas some experts wanted to strengthen the influence and the competences of the cantons, for others only the national government was able to face the new tasks (ibid.). Since the 1970s, there have been discussions about task-sharing between the different state levels, vertical and horizontal financial transfers, inter-cantonal cooperation, region-building, and even about amalgamations of cantons.

The latter is certainly not a realistic scenario due to the dominant role of the cantons. But there are vertical and countless horizontal cooperation schemes (e.g. intercantonal conferences, Vatter, 2006). But political cleavages transcend horizontal and vertical collaboration, which makes it difficult to find agreements (Kübler et al., 2003). This is also because cantons enjoy significant weight in vertical cooperation schemes due to the top-down hierarchy of Swiss federalism and because communes have nothing to say in the affairs of higher levels. Therefore, Kübler et al. (2003) see a lack of direct vertical channels of exchange between different state levels.

As already mentioned in the introduction, Swiss metropolitan areas are highly fragmented. Functional urban spaces and territorially bound decision-making structures are not congruent at all (Kübler et al., 2003: 267). In the three-tiered federalism consisting of the national, cantonal and municipal level, agglomerations or metropolitan areas simply do not exist – at least not on the institutional level. As a result of the specific Swiss federal system, metropolitanisation led to various systems of interlocking politics (ibid.).

Based on a new article of the revised Swiss constitution, the Swiss federal government initiated in 2001 the so called “agglomeration policy”. The agglomeration policy makes the first time that the federal government wants to steer the urbanisation process on a national scale. Article 50 in the new Swiss constitution did not change the federalist task sharing between the

different federal state levels. Therefore, the federal government can act only in subsidiary terms. But still, the federal agglomeration policy aims at changing steering capacities in metropolitan areas. It is an effort to support the cantons and communes in their activities of intermunicipal cooperation. The main goals are to foster vertical co-operation, to promote horizontal co-operation within agglomerations, to generate a systematic orientation of federal policies toward the needs of urban areas (Bundesamt für Raumentwicklung ARE and Staatssekretariat für Wirtschaft SECO, 2006). The three main instruments of the federal agglomeration policy are the "Tripartite Agglomeration Conference" (TAK), the "model projects", and the so-called "agglomeration programmes" (Kübler, 2006). The TAK involves all three state levels. The TAK's aim is to make sure that the state, cantons, cities and municipalities work together more closely and develop a common agglomeration policy. Therefore, this conference should foster vertical integration (Arn and Stecker, 2004: 13-14). With the "model projects", the federal administration supports innovative projects. These best practice models are cooperative projects between community, canton and regional levels; they should foster horizontal cooperation (Bundesamt für Raumentwicklung ARE, 2003). "Agglomeration programmes" are long-term planning instruments that are elaborated jointly by cantons and communes. They aim to improve transport infrastructure within metropolitan areas.

With all these instruments, the federal government wants to affect governance schemes at the metropolitan level. If the federal government finances the model projects and especially the agglomeration programmes, this is only under the condition that these projects involve area-wide cooperation among the centre city and surrounding communes and the cantonal level. This means that the federal government gets involved in urban governance questions. If the national government intervenes at the level of communes, this means an intervention in the cantonal legal sovereignty (Serdült and Schenkel, 2006: 558). Kübler et al. (2003: 269) concluded almost ten years ago that the implementation of the new collaboration platforms with the newly established federal agglomeration policy led to tensions between cities, surrounding communes, and cantons. Even before this new article, the federal government used to influence communal politics and policy in an indirect way, namely through legislation and subsidies. And despite the new constitution and article 50, direct contact between the federal level and the local level is still contested (567). Cities do not have a special role in the vertical federal system and agglomerations are still not recognized in the federal System.

The question is therefore whether the relationship between the federal, cantonal, and the local level changed in any way because of the federal policy. Early on, researchers doubted the federal agglomeration policy would be able to strengthen the position of agglomerations, because of the constitutionally given leading role of the cantons (Koll-Schretzenmayr and Schmid, 2003). In the last ten years, the federal government actually fostered horizontal and vertical cooperation within agglomerations with the instruments of the agglomeration policy (see Kübler and Plüss, 2010, CEAT et al., 2010). But this did not automatically lead to a strengthening of the cities and agglomerations; rather it was the cantons that gained a leading role in the implementation of the agglomeration policies (Kübler and Plüss, 2010: 22-23). According to these preliminary findings, the theoretical assumption that cities and metropolitan regions gained influence in the federal system cannot be sustained. It is also not clear

whether the national scale gained weight in relation to other levels of government. But it became evident that it is very difficult to make assumptions for Switzerland in general. Swiss agglomerations and metropolitan regions differ significantly according to forms of cooperation and the relative strength of involved players (CEAT et al., 2010, Arn and Stecker, 2004). This evidence shows that research about changes in the relationship between different scales has to focus on agglomerations and metropolitan areas. Further research has to be done to address the question of governance change in specific city regions. We have to identify decision-making styles as well as centripetal and centrifugal tendencies in each agglomeration. In doing this, we will possibly be able to tell something about the political strategies behind metropolitan reform initiatives.

But what about the emergence of new state scales? Do agglomerations have become an essential new level of governance? In the Swiss metropolitan governance discourse, the term "agglomeration" is very common. Although the Swiss federal system did not undergo any major change, the agglomeration as a possible new fourth level of governance is at least discussed. Whereas historically the role of different state levels was consistently debated, it was only recently that the idea of a totally new state level became a part of this discussion. But even though innovative models of cooperation in metropolitan areas have been developed recently (e.g. in Berne and Fribourg), there is not a real redistribution of power within the Swiss federal system. Therefore, while we observe the evolution of a new scale indeed, agglomerations are still more symbolic than actual levels of governance.

Conclusion

In 2001, a federal agglomeration policy was launched, marking the first time the federal government directly interfered in urban affairs. This paper addressed the question of the impact of this federal agglomeration policy on Swiss federalism. Did new lines of conflicts emerge and did the strong position of cantons in the Swiss federal system change when faced with problems of urban governance? To tackle this question, we developed a preliminary theoretical framework based on theories of federalism and the politics of scale approach. Whereas theories of politics of scale suggest that governance models in city regions changed, and metropolitan regions gained steering capacities and more influence in the federal system, theories of federalism provide explanations for processes of governance change.

Initial findings showed that the federal agglomeration policy fostered vertical and horizontal cooperation in metropolitan areas. At the same time, new lines of conflict emerged. The new cooperation schemes may gradually lead to a governance change, but more in an implicit way. So far, the hierarchy between the different state levels has not changed. The strong position of the cantons in Swiss federal system persists. Therefore, we came to the preliminary conclusion that agglomerations have not been strengthened yet in the Swiss federal system. But these tentative findings also showed that it is very difficult to provide evidence on a national level. In order to gain more insights, we will have to take a closer look on the metropolitan

level. Further research needs to be done by means of case studies in several Swiss agglomerations. This will allow us to test and improve the theoretical framework, too.

One very interesting question remains, namely, whether the agglomeration has become an essential level of governance. The tentative findings about the federal agglomeration policy show that there is at least a discursive emergence of a new level of governance. Although agglomerations do not exist on an institutional level, the metropolitan area is perceived as the crucial space where the economic development takes place.

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